



Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association

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Chairs Sen. John J. Cronin and Rep. Daniel Cahill
Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Members of the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security,

On behalf of the Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association (MLA) and the ~1800 members we represent, we submit the following comments in strong support for the proposed amendment to Section 2B of Chapter 639 of the Acts of 1950, which designates communities within a fifty-mile radius of nuclear power plants or inactive nuclear facilities storing nuclear waste as "nuclear power plant areas."

This legislation is an important step toward strengthening environmental protections and ensuring that communities potentially affected by nuclear facilities are appropriately recognized and safeguarded. By expanding the designation to include areas surrounding inactive facilities that continue to store spent nuclear fuel or other high-level radioactive waste, the amendment acknowledges that environmental and public health risks do not end when a plant ceases operation. Nuclear waste remains hazardous for many years, and communities within proximity deserve continued oversight, transparency, and protection.

The Commonwealth's coastal and marine ecosystems are vital not only to the environment but also to the economic wellbeing of thousands of residents. Industries such as commercial fishing, aquaculture, and tourism rely on clean, healthy waters. Any action that risks introducing contaminated or heated water into marine environments threatens these livelihoods, particularly in sensitive ecosystems like the Gulf of Maine, which is already experiencing rapid environmental change.

Protecting these ecosystems is critical for sustaining local economies, preserving marine biodiversity, and maintaining public trust in the safety of our natural resources. Establishing clear oversight and accountability for nuclear facilities—active or inactive—helps ensure that environmental risks are properly managed and that communities have a voice in decisions that affect their environment and economic stability.

The importance of protecting our marine environment is underscored by the work of organizations such as the MLA, established in 1963 and representing approximately 1,800 members from Canada to Cape May. Their membership includes commercial lobstermen, charter boat operators, tuna fishermen, aquaculture businesses, ground fishermen, and numerous shoreside businesses that depend directly on a thriving ocean ecosystem. The MLA is actively engaged in ocean policy and management, participating in the Massachusetts Marine Fisheries

Commission, the Massachusetts Ocean Advisory Commission, the Massachusetts Ocean Acidification Commission, the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team, and many other efforts to ensure the long-term sustainability of our ocean resources.

The economic contribution of this industry is significant. In 2024 alone, 872 commercial lobstermen in the Commonwealth landed more than 16 million pounds of lobster, generating approximately \$274 million in economic value for the local economy. This industry provides sustainable, healthy, and locally harvested seafood, but it depends entirely on a clean and healthy marine ecosystem. Without that foundation, the commercial fishing industry—and the livelihoods it supports—cannot survive.

For this reason, the concerns raised by the fishing community about the potential discharge of toxic or heated water into the ocean are deeply troubling. The Gulf of Maine is already the fastest warming body of water on the planet. Allowing the dumping of large quantities of contaminated or heated water into these waters would only add further stress to an already fragile ecosystem. Such actions could jeopardize the livelihoods of hundreds of fishermen and thousands of workers across the Commonwealth whose jobs depend on healthy marine resources.

Currently, 675 commercial lobstermen land more than 13.4 million pounds of lobster annually from these waters. Any decision that risks polluting this pristine ecosystem is not only environmentally irresponsible but also economically damaging. The fishing industry, coastal businesses, and the communities that depend on them could face serious consequences if marine habitats are compromised.

Beyond the fishing industry, there are many potential unintended consequences that must be considered. Marine wildlife, including the endangered North Atlantic right whale that feeds in Cape Cod Bay on abundant copepods, could be affected. Tourism may also suffer, as visitors travel from across the country and the world to experience the historic coastal communities of Massachusetts—often called “America’s Hometown”—and to enjoy fresh, locally harvested seafood from the Gulf of Maine. Damage to the reputation or health of these waters could have long-lasting impacts on public perception and local economies.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support the amendment to Section 2B of Chapter 639 of the Acts of 1950. Strengthening protections around nuclear waste storage sites and ensuring that environmental risks are carefully managed is a responsible and necessary step to safeguard the health of our communities, our fisheries, and our coastal waters for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to protecting the people and natural resources of the Commonwealth.

Sincerely, *Beth Casoni*, Executive Director